

Recreation Committee Mins - 07/29/08

Hopkinton Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes July 29, 2008

Meeting called to order at 6:05 PM at the Slusser Senior Center.

Members in attendance: Jim Martin, Louise Carr, Mark Newton, Selectman Representative Jim O'Brien and Recreation Director Justin La Vigne. Vernon Miller, Jessica Shimen and Valerie Carr came late. Guests were Merle Dustin and Patrice La Vigne. ~

Approval of 6/24/08 Recreation Committee minutes:

The minutes from 6/24/08 were approved with one change. In regard to the 4th of July Family Fun Day, Jessica did the follow-up calls for the potential cook-off participants, not the raffle prize follow-up calls as originally stated.

Business:

Justin spoke to the committee about being the "eyes and ears" in the community. He wants to hear all things, good and bad. Both Jessica and Mark have given such feedback and Justin finds it very helpful. It is important that any communication come to Justin first. There was a situation where a community member mistakenly thought leftover Stars on Ice tickets were given to Recreation Committee members for free. Unfortunately, Justin did not find out about it until much after the initial question. It eventually was resolved, but could have been resolved in a better manner. One way would be for the community member to check the minutes, because all actions by the Recreation Department are documented. So, should any Rec Committee members hear of any questions or concerns in the future, call or email Justin immediately and if he doesn't return the message within a timely manner,

continue to call/email again or come to see him in person. Overall, it's just important to continually educate the public about what the Recreation Department does. Mark said it helps when we put our name on events, like we have been doing.

The discussion about recreation communication continued, but shifted focus to see what can be done about improving communication from all recreation groups, such as HYSA and Hopkinton Soccer Club. Jim M. noted that it's pretty confusing for townspeople to know who to go to for what. Justin said it is difficult, even for him. Part of it could be because other groups are run by several volunteers, so one person is not always appointed and may not be the leader for a long time. He said it is getting a little better because all the town groups do a biannual meeting. Still, with the cutback to Town Lines, which used to go out quarterly, but now goes out once per year, the community still lacks comprehensive information. Everyone agreed the town needs a community calendar, listing everything from everyone. Justin said the Town Web site does have a calendar, but it is not utilized in that way right now. Also, Justin discovered a free blog used by other communities called AmericanTowns.com. You can submit calendar items and so far the Rec Dept, the library and others have joined it. Several members also suggested looking into bulk mailing to reach people that don't have the Internet or kids in the school system, which is how the Rec Dept currently advertises. Jessica quoted the for-profit rate to be \$0.17 and Jim O. noted that town gets the nonprofit bulk rate of \$0.14. Justin noted mailing is not in his budget right now. Louise also said the Recreation Guidebook needs to be updated and reprinted, so Justin should look into those costs at the same time.

Justin also updated the committee about Columbia Hall Community Center. Justin reminded the committee that the prospect of closing the building comes up every budget year. It has come up again at a recent Selectmen meeting. Jim O. said originally the BOS sent a town inspector to look into it

because there was an issue with the roof this winter and the BOS was worried how much money in repairs were needed. The town inspector did not give a positive report about the building. So, a structural engineer will be coming Thurs., July 31, to see if the building is safe to occupy. The report will be ready on Aug. 25 at the BOS meeting. Justin said in his opinion, it's a great space, but it needs work and is underutilized. It gets used about 25 to 35 hours per week. But that is the same usage rate as the Slusser Senior Center. Columbia Hall hosts a lot of community programs, such as fitness classes, tumbling tots, children's dance program, adult dancing classes, Breakfast with Santa, stained glass, indoor yard sale and the list goes on. Other town groups, such as the Contoocook School and Hopkinton Independent School, use the building as well. If the building closed, Justin would have to find an alternative location for the programs. And he is currently working with a potential group that would bump usage up significantly. For the public, the building is available for rent at a reasonable cost. However, many individuals cannot obtain the necessary \$1 million insurance policy. Jim O. said the BOS is looking into the rider policy. In fact, some town groups use the Rec Dept's insurance policy, although the Department doesn't know details of these events. Justin plans to talk to the BOS about this. Jessica asked if it was legal to use the Slusser Senior Center only for seniors, but other members assured her there was a clear agreement saying it had to be used as "sufficient space for seniors," not exclusive, and that's how it is legal. Louise stressed that the Slusser Center should not turn into a community center because of Gene Slusser's involvement and donation. Jim O. reminded everyone that there is \$265K in the capital reserve fund for the future of a community center. The barn has previously been proposed as a community center. The point is, if Columbia Hall closes, there needs to be a plan B. Merle wanted to know what percentage of outside groups were using Columbia Hall versus the Rec Dept., but Justin said he doesn't have that info. She said other groups could definitely find other spaces

in town to rent, but Justin said a lot of the groups like the stage and rest of the space only found in Columbia Hall. Louise pointed out that other places aren't as flexible and their usage helps offset the operational costs of the building.

Update on Past/Ongoing Programs:

4th of July – Louise did a wrap-up of the event by citing some changes for 2009. These include, but are not limited to:

Port-a-potties

Bigger and food/game signage

Map of field to show where different booths are

Rope off certain areas so games don't run into each other

Canopies to provide some shaded area for people to sit

Better advertising for timeline of events, possibly mailing for in-town people

Better trash monitoring and involvement from recycling/green committees to commit to recycling

No band or just background music, as announcer/band kept interfering with each other

Face painting

More handicap parking and parking assistant for that area

More organization with kiddie parade (e.g., official registration table, more music)

Better system for raffle tickets/50-50 sales

Possible small fees (\$0.10-\$0.25) for games to help defray costs and cut down on kids playing same game over and over again to get prizes)

More play-by-play announcing via wireless microphone for big games (i.e., pie-eating contest)

Replace chili cook-off with Bake off

Pond opened – Saturday, June 28. Lifeguards will be on duty 7 days per week from 10am to 6pm. Have heard great feedback about staff. Piece of trampoline was burned before the season when it should not have been out, but guards temporarily fixed it for the season. Since pond opened, no

reports of vandalism. Justin will order a new trampoline piece for next year.

Swim Lessons – There have been more than 75 kids in swim lessons.

Summer Camp – So far, weekly sessions have ranged from 25 kids to 42. Money situation is going really well and Justin plans to pay for two counselors next year. Behavior problems in camp have been bad this year based on what returning counselors have said. Mark suggested that the 5-12 age range may be too broad and age groups should be separated in the future. Justin said complaints from parents have been few as he received the mid-session surveys back.

British Soccer Camp – Nearly 100 kids have signed up, which has already exceeded last year's enrollment.

Children's Dance Program – Class initiated by trained professional community member on Wednesday nights from 5-6pm. Will run through Aug. 13, but may extend beyond that. For children aged 5-10 years. Classes cost \$3 per class.

Outdoor Soccer League - Sunday nights at Houston Fields. For adults 18 years or older.

Upcoming Programs:

Paddle/Camp at Squam Lake – Justin said he purchased the permit for 12 people to camp, but only has 4 signed up. He does not think that is enough people to run as a recreation trip, as fee included permit and food. So he talked to the interested parties and they said they would be willing to buy out the permit from the town and go on their own if the Rec Dept doesn't host the trip.

Babysitting First-Aid Courses – Plan to schedule more of these, always popular.

Scrapbooking Nights – Free for beginners or experts. Will run on Thursday and Friday evenings at Columbia Hall. Looking into dates.

Tumbling Tots – Program will restart in September when circus performer instructor finishes tour. Will continue to take place in Columbia Hall.

Soccer League – Through Fieldhouse Sports, Outdoor Rec will sponsor a team of adults 18 years or older to play indoors in Bow through the winter. Will start in the fall. Games played on weeknights. Right now, people are playing on Sunday nights on Houston Fields.

Movie in the Park – Justin said he wanted to do another one and was looking for a good date when it wasn't too cool.

Discussion led to Saturday, Sept. 6 as the best date. Justin said he will contact the committee for movie suggestions.

Indoor Movie – Justin asked for feedback about showing the Rocky Horror Picture Show on Friday, Oct. 31 at Columbia Hall. The committee concluded that it was a clever idea, but there may not be a big turnout among adults. And having a bigger turnout would make for a better show. Jim M. suggested looking at doing it at the Red River Theater, where it's only \$250 to rent.

Haunted House – There was a big discussion as to whether the Rec Dept should do the Haunted House this year.

Although it is a low-cost event, it is a ton of work for the Committee and volunteers, although there are very few people in town who volunteer for it. Besides that, the weather is always questionable. The committee discussed scaling it back or changing it a bit. They took a vote whether to move forth with it and the majority said yes. Everyone said they will work to get more volunteers involved and re-evaluate how to better utilize the cabin space. The committee decided the date for the event would be Sunday, October 26.

Other Business:

Jessica asked if the Rec Dept could host some "free play" at Columbia Hall on weekends during the winter. She said it is important to find something for the kids to do. Jim M.

suggested finding a high school student or hiring someone to run it. Or to charge a registration fee per session. Jessica said she will ask around to start planning for it.

Jessica also asked if the meeting could be moved to 6:30pm instead of 6pm. Justin said he would check with all the committee members.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 26 @ 6:00 PM at the Slusser Senior Center.

We are adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Justin La Vigne